

## SHORT NOTE

**Possible source of the Madeira monarchs *Danaus plexippus* (L.).** I have read with interest the article by Allan Showler (2001) which prompted me to re-read the one by Salmon & Wakeham-Dawson (1999) as well as consulting Manley & Allcard (1970) and other references to Madeiran butterflies such as Swash & Askew (1982), Owen, Shreeve & Smith (1986) and Shapiro (1992). Now back in the 1960s The Entomological Field Station in Cambridge had a large patch of *Asclepias curassavica* in cultivation and while I do not recollect the original purpose, it seemed a pity not to make further use of it and I had a colleague send some *Danaus plexippus* from the States. These were sent as fresh adults papered with the wings folded and inserted into envelopes which were then carefully packed into a strong box. They arrived in perfect condition and by the following day were mating and then egg-laying. Not only did I succeed in breeding several generations but was also successful in rearing them on a similar synthetic diet to that being used for *Pieris brassicae* (L.). Having a surplus I distributed some to various friends and colleagues and these included that delightful couple Bill and Margaret Beer. So could it be that the Monarchs in Spain and Madeira that it seems were introduced there by the Beers may well have originated from my stock which I in turn had received from the United States?

As well as being successful with the Monarch the Beers were also one of the earliest breeders to be successful with Deaths-head Hawkmoth (*Manduca atropos* (L.)) on which Margaret published an extensive article (Beer 1978). However, apart from rearing insects Bill and Margaret were interested in all aspects of natural history, including ornithology and when Doris and I went to stay with them our chief recollection is not of insects but the feeding of the local owls, for they kept a deep-freeze full of day old chicks and every evening a few of these were brought out and either placed on a wooden stand or thrown into the air when said owls, who knew what to expect, would swoop from the nearby woodland and enjoy their bounty.—  
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